

## The Ecclesial Method

Msgr. Francis D. Kelly outlines the '**Ecclesial Method**' of catechesis in his book 'The Mystery We Proclaim'.

The ecclesial method uses five stages to develop a catechetical topic, the stages of:

- A. **Preparation.** The first stage of catechesis involves the preparation of the individual to hear and act on the Word of God. **Essential to this stage is the 'calculated disengagement' of the individual, helping them to leave behind the cares of the world and become focused on the task of hearing God's Word.** It is imperative that the study of God's Word have a different 'feel' than the study of any other academic subject. It is primarily an activity of prayer, and needs a quiet openness on the part of the individual in order to be received.

Examples of Preparation include:

- Creating a sense of the sacred in the meeting environment, with a prayer space in the room with: Prayer table with liturgical color cloth, Candle in a container, Large Crucifix, enthroned Bible.
- Gathering through Song/Music.
- Taking time in silence.

- B. **Proclamation.** Proclamation is the announcing of God's Word. This includes both the reading of Scripture and the summary of the corresponding doctrine. **In this process it is essential to begin with the Scriptural Story.** The Scriptures provide the soul for the doctrine, and without this step the doctrine loses its connection with God's plan of salvation. This step should include both a liturgical-style proclamation from the Bible, but also a short summary of the teaching for this session. This short summary should be referred to throughout the entire session.

Examples of Proclamation include:

- Beginning by singing a short antiphon such as "Thy Word is a Lamp unto My Feet" while lighting the candle
- Having a prepared reader proclaim the Scriptures while all follow along
- Briefly announce short summary of the session, connecting the Scripture passage to the Church's catechesis on this subject.

- C. **Explanation.** The stage of Explanation seeks to deepen the individual's understanding of the Word of God, both scripturally and doctrinally. This will be the longest stage in the session. **Explanation will help the individual understand the details of the Scriptural story, the details of Church doctrine, and**

**the connection between the two.** It is essential in this stage that the catechist be familiar with the teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Examples of Explanation include:

- Teaching
- Research Activity

D. **Application.** Essential to the study of the Word of God helping the individual apply it to their personal lives. **In this stage the individual needs to reflect on his/her life, hear the voice of Christ, and begin to appropriate it in daily life.** Without this stage, the Christian doctrine loses its flavor and risks becoming simply another academic subject. This stage should invite the individual to a deeper conversion, which includes repentance for sin and growth in holiness. This stage needs to have testimonies from older Christians, time to study and learn from the lives of the Saints, and time to make formal commitments to strengthen a growing relationship with Christ.

Examples of Application include:

- Small Group discussion
- Saint story
- Making simple, practical resolutions to become more like Christ
- Witnessing in a particular way to the doctrine being taught here

E. **Celebration.** As the process began in prayer in the Preparation stage, so it concludes in prayer in this stage. **This stage should allow the individual to express gratitude to God, to strengthen his/her commitment to the entire Body of Christ, and to outwardly express his/her interior resolutions to imitate Christ.** This stage directly leads to the Eucharist, the 'Source and Summit' of our Faith.

Examples include:

- Modified Liturgy of the Hours with time for intentions.

## **Sample Outline Based on the Ecclesial Method**

### Preparation

Greeting

Gathering Song

### Proclamation

Scripture Passage

Quiet Reflection on the Passage

Table Discussion: Share one point from the passage that spoke to you

### Explanation

Teaching

### Application

Table Assignments/Small Group Discussion

Large Group Discussion

Reflection on Life of a Saint

### Celebration

Short Liturgy of the Hours/Intentions/Hail Mary

Announcements/Snacks

## Quotes from St. John Bosco

*Give me souls; away with the rest.*

*Suffer, work, and humble (yourself) in all things whenever it is a question of saving souls.*

*Set aside some time every day for meditation and spiritual reading.*

*God sees you.*

*Do not put off until tomorrow the good you can do today. You may not have a tomorrow.*

*Let us strive to fare well in this life and in the next.*

*Be slow to pass judgment.*

*Do you want your companions to respect you? Always think well of everyone, and be ready to help others. Do this and you will be happy.*

*Run, jump, have all the fun you want at the right time, but for heaven's sake, do not commit sin!*

*Serve the Lord joyfully.*

*Always be cheerful and good, but never bad.*

*By means of affection, gain the heart of the youth.*

*Without confidence and love, there can be no true education.*